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METHOD FOR MAKING RAT POISON
FROM RED SQUILL IS WORKED OUT

The value of red squill as a rat poison has been known in Europe for many years, but only within recent years has this plant substance been developed for that purpose in this country. Squill is a perennial bulbous plant that grows wild on the coasts of Italy, Sicily, and Sardinia and elsewhere along the Mediterranean Sea. There are two varieties of squill that are used commercially--white and red. The white squill is used in human medicine and the red is used as a rat poison, being a specific poison for rats.

For several seasons the U. S. Department of Agriculture, through its Bureaus of Biological Survey, Chemistry and Soils, and Plant Industry, has been working to develop a potent red-squill preparation for the effective destruction of rats, and it presents the results of this work in a new bulletin, "Red-squill Powders as Raticides," Technical Bulletin No. 134-T. Red squill, says the bulletin, is an almost ideal rat poison, being relatively safe, economical, and effective, and these are requirements which the raticides in most general use today--arsenic, barium carbonate, phosphorus, and strychnine--do not so fully meet.

The investigators concluded from their studies that powdered red squill is toxic to rats but that white squill is not; and that to cats, dogs, chickens, and pigeons red squill is nontoxic under normal conditions when exposed in the concentrations recommended for rat poisons, as shown by the fact that food poisoned with squill either was not eaten by these animals, or, if eaten, was promptly vomited.

One method of preparing red-squill powders that yielded a more toxic product than others is described in detail in the bulletin and is recommended for commercial use.

This report is of special interest to pharmacologists and manufacturers of raticides, as it gives basic information for the further development of red-squill preparations, and making available to the public a rat poison that can be safely used in places where the use of other poisons has proved too dangerous to human life and domestic animals.

The publication may be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., at 10 cents per copy.

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